

This problem deserves national discussion. Hunger affects so many aspects of our society. In the spirit of that landmark conference held by the White House in 1969, I am asking President Bush to convene a second White House conference so that the best and brightest minds can review these problems together.

I am honored to work with leaders of the battle to eradicate hunger: Former Congressman Tony Hall, now the United States Ambassador to the U.N. food and agricultural programs, and former Congresswoman Eva Clayton from my own State of North Carolina, now an assistant director general for the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome. Both were champions on hunger while in Congress. And there are many others. Former Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, a leader on gleanings; Catherine Bertini, Under Secretary General of the United Nations who was praised for her leadership to get food aid to those in need throughout the world; Congresswoman JO ANN EMERSON, cochair of the Congressional Hunger Center who carries on the legacy of her late husband Bill who was a dear friend and leader on this issue.

Here in this body, my chairman on the Agriculture Committee, THAD COCHRAN, and ranking member TOM HARKIN, DICK LUGAR, PATRICK LEAHY, PAT ROBERTS, and GORDON SMITH are leaders in addressing hunger issues.

Partisan politics has no role in this fight. Hunger does not differentiate between Democrats and Republicans. Just as it stretches across so many ethnicities, so many areas, so must we.

As Washington Post columnist David Broder wrote yesterday: America has some problems that defy solution. This one does not. It just needs caring people and a caring government working together.

I get inspiration from the Bible and John, chapter 21, when Jesus asked Peter: Do you love me? Peter, astounded that Jesus was asking him this question again, says: Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. And Jesus replies: Then feed my sheep.

One of North Carolina's heroes, the Reverend Billy Graham, has often said that we are not cisterns made for hoarding; we are vessels made for sharing. I look forward to working with Billy Graham in this effort. Indeed every religion, not just Christianity, calls on us to feed the hungry. Jewish tradition promises that feeding the hungry will not go unrewarded. Fasting is one of the pillars of faith of Islam and is a way to share the conditions of the hungry poor while purifying the spirit and humbling the flesh. Compassion or karuna is one of the key virtues of Buddhism. This issue cuts across religious lines, too.

I speak today on behalf of the millions of families who are vulnerable, who have no voice, for this little Sudanese girl in this picture, stumbling toward a feeding station and so many like her. I saw this picture some years

ago in a newspaper. It broke my heart. I went back to find that picture today because, as I recall the story, she had been walking for a long, long way and she had not yet reached that feeding station. That has been emblazoned on my mind since that time.

Anthropologist Margaret Meade said: Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

One of my heroes is William Wilberforce, a true man of God. An old friend John Newton persuaded him that his political life could be used in the service of God. He worked with a dedicated group. They were committed people of faith. His life and career were centered on two goals: abolishing slavery in England and improving moral values. He knew that his commitment might cost him friends and influence but he was determined to stand for what he believed was right. It took 21 years and Wilberforce sacrificed his opportunity to serve as Prime Minister. But he was the moving force in abolishing slavery and changing the moral values of England.

In my lifetime, I have seen Americans split the atom, abolish Jim Crow, eliminate the scourge of polio, win the cold war, plant our flag on the surface of the Moon, map the human genetic code, and belatedly recognize the talents of women, minorities, the disabled, and others once relegated to the shadows. Already a large group of citizens has joined what I believe will become an army of volunteers and advocates.

Today I invite all of my colleagues to join me in this endeavor. Let us recommit ourselves to the goal of eradicating hunger. Committed individuals can make a world of difference, even, I might say, a different world.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my letter to President Bush be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, June 4, 2003.

President GEORGE W. BUSH,  
The White House,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: The White House Conference on Food, Nutrition and Health, convened by President Richard Nixon on December 2, 1969, may well have been one of the country's most productive and far-reaching White House conferences. At the time, President Nixon said that the conference was "intended to focus national attention and resources on our country's remaining—and changing—nutrition problems." In hindsight, it achieved that and more.

So much has been accomplished since that historic White House conference. With bipartisan support in Congress, the food stamp program has been reformed and expanded, school nutrition programs have been improved and now reach over 27 million children each school day, WIC was created, and nutrition labels now appear on most food items.

At the same time, however, the mission is not complete. There are children who qualify

for reduced price meals in North Carolina, and throughout the country, but their families cannot afford even this nominal fee. And while 16 million children participate in the free and reduced school lunch program, in the summer many children go without. America's Second Harvest, an extraordinary organization, reports that demand often exceeds the supply of food in local communities. Further, the country is challenged by the paradox of hunger and obesity.

Mr. President, it is time, I believe, for another White House conference to assess the progress we have made in the fight against hunger and to recommit the country to the remaining challenges. I was pleased to work with President Nixon on the 1969 conference; I would be honored to work with you on a second historic conference.

There is a very special tradition in America when it comes to fighting hunger. Perhaps it is a function of our agricultural bounty, the famines in Europe that led to early migration, or the teachings of all major religions, but Americans are intolerant of hunger in our land of plenty.

Mr. President, I hope you will convene a second White House conference with the business, civic and charitable organizations, educators and advocates who continue to work tirelessly to address hunger in America and around the world. Hunger is not a partisan issue and I know that we can work together, with our colleagues on both sides of the political aisle, to address the problems and needs that still exist. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

ELIZABETH DOLE.

Mrs. DOLE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 5 minutes as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### PRAISING SENATOR ELIZABETH DOLE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I want to join in the praise for the Senator from North Carolina. She reminds us today of what an advantage it is to have someone of such experience serving in our so-called freshman class. She has been a pioneer during her whole career, whether at Harvard Law School, the Nixon White House, or in the Cabinet of two Presidents. I have had the privilege of working with her all during that time on a parallel track.

On two occasions, I competed in a Presidential race with another person named Dole. I am not embarrassed to say I did relatively better against her husband than I did against her. They are both here and I have enormous admiration for both her and her husband, and all of us are enriched by her membership in our class in the Senate.

#### THE CHILD TAX CREDIT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, today, the President visited with troops overseas to thank them. I want those troops to know we are paying attention to their families at home.

Last week, as chairman of the Subcommittee on Children and Families, I held a hearing at Fort Campbell in